

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4986
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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SF, PINT, PINS

SUBJ: INTERNAL SECURITY COMMISSION DEBATE

REF: CAPE TOWN 0097

1. SUMMARY: LENGTHY DEBATE ON BILL TO CREATE PERMANENT PARLIAMENTARY INTERNAL SECURITY COMMISSION (REFTEL) SAW PRIME MINISTER VORSTER MAKE CONCERNED EFFORT TO ENLIST UNITED PARTY (UP) SUPPORT FOR MEASURE. UP HAS BASED PUBLIC OPPOSITION TO BILL ON CHARGE THAT LEGISLATION WILL DESTROY GOVERNMENTAL SEPARATION OF POWERS BY CONVERTING PARLIAMENT INTO EXTENSION OF EXECUTIVE. UP ALSO PROBABLY ANXIOUS TO AVOID FURTHER CHARGES THAT IT ABANDONING LONG STATED POSITION IN FAVOR OF RULE OF LAW AND OPPOSITION TO UNILATERAL EXECUTIVE SECURITY MEASURES SUCH AS BANNINGS. HOWEVER, MOST UP MEMBERS ARE TRULY CONCERNED ABOUT INTERNAL SECURITY THREAT AND THERE IS CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION THAT THIS CONCERN, COUPLED WITH VOERSTER'S WILLINGNESS TO CONCEDE ON SOME POINTS, MIGHT EVOLVE INTO UP SUPPORT FOR LEGISLATION AND/OR MEMBERSHIP ON COMMISSION ONCE CREATED. END SUMMARY.

2. PRIME MINISTER VORSTER FEB 24 BEGAN SECOND READING
DEBATE ON BILL TO CREATE PERMANENT PARLIAMENTARY INTERNAL
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SECURITY COMMISSION. BILL PROPOSES TO ESTABLISH BODY

SIMILAR TO SCHLEBUSCH COMMISSION, COMPOSED OF TEN MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, APPOINTED BY AND RESPONSIBLE TO STATE PRESIDENT WHICH WILL INVESTIGATE MATTERS RELATING TO INTERNAL SECURITY. IN INTRODUCING BILL PM SAID THAT HE WAS SIMPLY FULFILLING HIS PART OF A CONTRACT BY COMPLYING WITH RECOMMENDATION TO ESTABLISH SUCH A BODY MADE IN FIRST INTERIM REPORT OF SCHLEBUSCH COMMISSION. HE STRESSED THAT HE ANXIOUS TO INVOLVE PARLIAMENT IN INTERNAL SECURITY MATTERS IN A BIPARTISAN MANNER.

3. LEADER OF OPPOSITION SIR DE VILLIERS GRAAFF WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED THAT UP WOULD OPPOSE BILL SUPPORTED NEED FOR BIPARTISAN ACTIVITY, BUT ARGUED THAT PROPOSED COMMISSION WOULD CAUSE PARLIAMENT TO IMPINGE UPON LEGITIMATE POLICE AND JUDICIAL FUNCTIONS AND DESTROY THE PRINCIPLE OF SEPARATION OF POWERS BY MAKING THIS COMMISSION OF PARLIAMENTARIANS NO MORE THAN A SIMPLE EXTENSION OF EXECUTIVE. GRAAFF ALSO ARGUED THAT COMMISSION'S MANDATE IS TOO WIDE AND THAT IT SHOULD BE CONFINED TO INVESTIGATIONS AND REPORTS OF MATTERS CONCERNING EXISTING AND CONTEMPLATED LEGISLATION AND ASSOCIATED ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES. HE ALSO OBJECTED TO COMMISSION'S SUBORDINATION TO STATE PRESIDENT WHO, THOUGH UNSTATED BY GRAAFF, IS MERELY FIGUREHEAD RESPONSIVE TO PRIME MINISTER. IN RESPONSE TO CONSTANT HECKLING FROM NAT AND PROGRESSIVE-REFORM (PRP) MEMBERS, GRAAFF ACKNOWLEDGED THAT UP MEMBERS OF SCHLEBUSCH COMMISSION HAD INITIALLY BACKED IDEA OF PERMANENT COMMISSION BUT HAD SINCE "HAD WISER THOUGHTS."

4. PRP SPOKESPERSON HELEN SUZMAN SAID THAT UP HAD CHANGED ITS POSITION BECAUSE IT REALIZED THAT ITS ASSOCIATION WITH SCHLEBUSCH COMMISSION HAD COST IT VOTES. THOUGH, LIKE GRAAFF SUZMAN CONCERNED WITH ISSUE OF SEPARATION OF POWERS, HER ATTACK DEALT WITH LARGER ISSUE OF GOVERNMENTAL REPRESSION. SHE ARGUED THAT SAG WANTS TO EMULATE MCCARTHYISM IN ORDER TO STIFLE LEGITIMATE CRITICISM OF ITS POLICIES.

5. IN COURSE OF FULL 3 1/2 DAY DEBATE MPS FOLLOWED LINE SET DOWN BY THEIR PRINCIPAL FIGURES, THOUGH NUANCES OF ARGU- LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MENTS OF INDIVIDUAL UP MEMBERS STUDIED WITH GREAT INTEREST AS IT IS GENERALLY ASSUMED THAT STRONG DIFFERENCES EXIST WITHIN UP ON ISSUE. NAT SPEAKERS CONTINUALLY REFERRED TO OBVIOUS DESIRE ON PART OF MANY CONSERVATIVE UP MEMBERS TO SUPPORT GOVERNMENT. PUSHING KNIFE IN WITH GREAT RELISH, NP ARGUED THAT UP'S OPPOSITION TO BILL PROMPTED BY BLACKMAIL OF FEW LIBERAL MPS, LED BY JAPIE BASSON AND SUPPORTED BY ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PRESS, WHO THREATENING TO

SPLIT PARTY IF THEIR MINORITY POSITION NOT ACCEPTED.

6. IN CLOSING DEBATE FEB 26 VORSTER AGAIN STRUCK POSE OF REASONABLENESS. HE SAID THAT BIPARTISAN SUPPORT OF BILL SO IMPORTANT THAT HE WOULD CONSIDER MAKING SOME CHANGES RESPONSIVE TO UP CRITICISM. IN PARTICULAR, HE NOW WILLING TO MAKE NEW BODY A SELECT COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE TO, AND APPOINTED BY, PARLIAMENT. HE STIPULATED THAT PARLIAMENT WOULD HAVE TO CHANGE ITS STANDING REGULATIONS, TO ALLOW COMMITTEE TO OPERATE WHILE LEGISLATURE NOT IN SESSION. VORSTER DID NOT DENY THAT COMMITTEE SHOULD STUDY CURRENT AND CONTEMPLATED LEGISLATION AS URGED BY UP, BUT INSISTED THAT IT MUST BE GIVEN TASK OF INVESTIGATING AND REPORTING ON ACTIVITIES OF CERTAIN ORGANIZATIONS AS HAD THE SCHLEBUSCH COMMISSION. HE ADDED THAT PARLIAMENT COULD DECIDE ON RELEASE OR PRIVACY OF SUCH REPORTS, A POWER RESERVED TO PRIME MINISTER IN ORIGINAL DRAFT. GRAAFF LATER SAID THAT PRIME MINISTER HAD NOT GONE FAR ENOUGH. PRESS SPECULATES THAT MAJOR OBSTACLE TO UP IS ITS RELUCTANCE TO BECOME INVOLVED IN INVESTIGATION OF ORGANIZATIONS OR INDIVIDUALS THE RESULTS OF WHICH MIGHT GIVE JUSTIFICATION TO SAG TO INDULGE IN BANNING ORDERS AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE RESTRICTIONS OVER WHICH UP WOULD HAVE NO CONTROL.

7. COMMENT: SAG DOES NOT NEED ADDITIONAL INTERNAL SECURITY APPARATUS NOR, MUCH LESS, THE UP'S VOTES TO PASS THE PROPOSED BILL. BUT VORSTER WOULD LIKE TO HAVE SOME FURTHER LEGISLATIVE ENDORSEMENT FOR SECURITY MEASURES AND REALIZES THAT HAVING UP OPPOSITION ON THE BANDWAGON WOULD GIVE ADDED CACHET TO SAG'S ACTIONS BOTH DOMESTICALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY. MOST UP MPS ARE AS FEARFUL OF "SUBVERSION" AS ARE THEIR NAT COLLEAGUES AND WOULD BE WILLING TO GO ALONG WITH GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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UP PROBABLY FEELS THAT IT CANNOT BE SEEN AS SUBVERTING ITS OLD ALLEGIANCE TO RULE OF LAW AND AGAIN FALL INTO SCHLEBUSCH TRAP OF SEEMING TO CONDONE DRACONIC EXECUTIVE ACTION. UP WOULD ALSO PROBABLY LIKE TO GAIN SOME SAY OVER ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES (BANNINGS, RESTRICTIONS) ARISING OUT OF SECURITY LEGISLATION, BUT IT DOUBTFUL THAT GOVERNMENT WHICH HAS JEALOUSLY GUARDED ITS EXECUTIVE PRIVILEGE IN THIS AREA WOULD BE WILLING TO ACQUIESCE. THE DISTANCE BETWEEN NP AND UP ON BILL HAS NARROWED, HOWEVER, AND INFORMED POLITICAL SOURCES, PERHAPS OVERLY CYNICAL, ARGUE THAT BEFORE FURTHER DEBATE (SOME WEEKS AWAY) A COMPROMISE WILL BE REACHED. OTHERS ASSERT THAT VORSTER HAS GONE AS FAR AS HE CAN GO AND THAT HE WILL PUSH BILL THROUGH, AS IS, IF NECESSARY. QUESTION THEN WILL BECOME WHETHER UP WILL ALLOW ITS MEMBERS TO SERVE ON BODY. SOME OBSERVERS

CONTEND THAT PRESSURE NOT TO BE LEFT OUT IN COLD WITH
PRP AND OTHER "DISLOYAL" ELEMENTS WILL EVENTUALLY MEAN
THAT, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, UP WILL SERVE ON COMMISSION.
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